

MANAGERIAL DIMENSION OF FOOD CRISIS

Abstract

Care for public health is of primary importance for any governmental policy, since human health is the most valuable for social development. The national health policy concentrates efforts toward strengthening public health and re-launching of economic activities. The paper analysis the public health indicators in Romania related to food safety. It ends up by identifying several challenges to be addressed at governmental level

Keywords: quality management, food safety, food security, sustainable agriculture

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DIMENSIUNEA MANAGERIALĂ A CRIZEI ALIMENTARE

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Rezumat

Grija pentru sănătate publică este de importanță primordială pentru orice politică guvernamentală, întrucât sănătatea umană este cea mai valoroasă pentru dezvoltarea socială. Politica națională de sănătate concentrează eforturile pentru întărirea sănătății publice și relansarea activităților economice. Lucrarea analizează indicatorii de sănătate publică din România care sunt legați de siguranța alimentară. Rezultă faptul că o serie de provocări trebuie adresate la nivel guvernamental.

Cuvinte cheie: managementul calității, siguranță alimentară, securitate alimentară, agricultură durabilă

1. PUBLIC HEALTH – A TOPICAL ISSUE

World Health Organization defines health as “welfare, complete from the physical, mentally and socially point of view and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (Vulcu, 2007). This formula shows that population health is determined by a large number of factors: economical, social, environmental, hereditary, individual characteristics including lifestyle of each person.

That is why health requires some important conditions, economical and social security, harmonious interpersonal and social relationships, a safe and healthy place for working and living, an adequate quality concerning water, air and soil, sufficient food completed with a healthy lifestyle and access to quality services regarding health.

On the one hand, the health sector is characterized by a high potential for development, innovation and dynamism, and on the other hand by the challenges it faces concerning the financial and social viability and the effectiveness of health systems, due to the ageing and the medical progress (CE, 2004).

Health status is a full index about socio-economic development of the country, a reflection of material and moral welfare, a huge influence upon the economical, cultural, and labour potential of the country. That is why, in order to evaluate the potential and the country elements in world or only at the regional level, health indicators are taken into consideration with the economical and political situation (Cerbu, 2008).

An important role in the social measures system of people sanitary – epidemiological welfare is relied on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, on the increase of health knowledge which can be achieved by health education – promoting health and a healthy lifestyle that contributes to strengthen and maintain the health and the recovery for the ability to work, extend life assets, attracting active population health (Glanz et al., 1997).

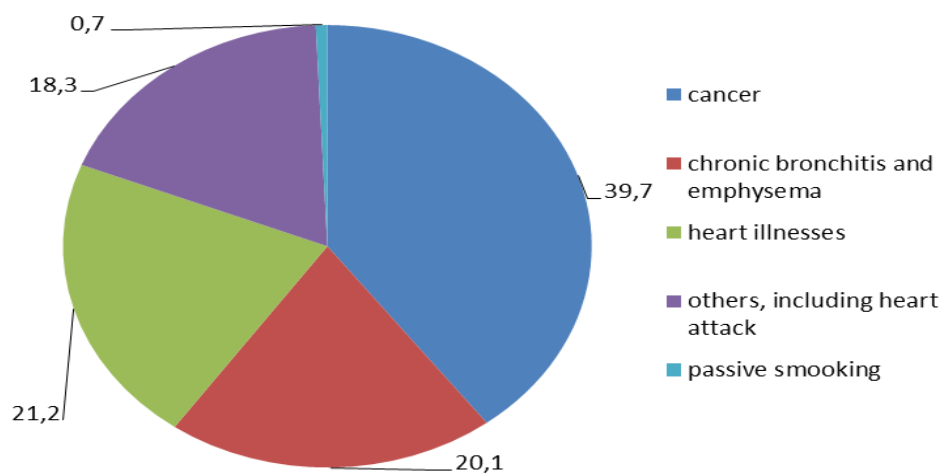


Fig.1. Deadly disease caused by smoking

Source: Puiu (2009). Drugs that can escape: cigarettes. <http://www.smokefree.lx.ro/index.html>

The most complicated and costly social and health problems are caused most of the times according to the scientific and sociological research by behaviour, lifestyle, habits – things that take birth in the childhood and adolescence and accompany us throughout life (CALM, 2008).

The alcohol, tobacco, drugs and social diseases – such as AIDS and tuberculosis and traffic accidents beside cancer, cardiovascular diseases, nutrition and mental illness – all these make more victims than the most tragic epidemics in previous centuries.

Thus, doctors, public authorities and local, national and international organizations should be more involved in promoting life patterns. Increasing the number of campaigns would be necessary – thing which may lead to:

- Raising awareness for everyone concerning the importance of a healthy life within a healthy environment;
- Development and building the cooperation abilities with other people and events of everyday life;
- Promoting some healthy diets based on standard nutritional recommendations, determined and validated as being the best due to clinical research;
- Promoting sport and other leisure activities;
- Encourage each person to give and receive social support within the networks in which they should really participate.

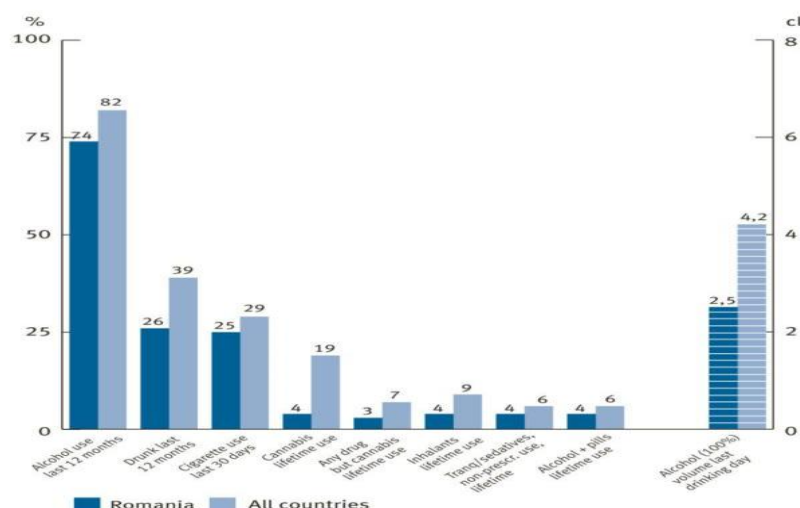


Fig.2. The consumption of alcohol, tobacco and drugs to young up to 16 years old
Source: Institute for Health Services and Management (2004)

As far as the health politics is concerned, this is a set of priorities and development lines in the health field that want to strengthen population health, achieving some adequate living standards and creating favourable conditions so as to achieve the maximum health potential of each person throughout their lifes.

2. THE POLICY REGARDING THE FOOD SAFETY – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Food and its safety in terms of consumer protection and human health, plants and animals must be an integral part of health protection policy. The food safety is essential to our health meaning the entire food journey starting with producers of raw materials to the finished product.

Food security has the following basic elements:

- The quality of raw materials that enters in the manufacturing process;
- The food production process;
- The storage and the transport of food;
- The way and the conditions food is sold.

The food policy covers a wide range of topics, these including: safety and food quality, environment, agriculture and fisheries, informing the consumer, research and development

(including genetically modified products) as well as legal and economic aspects such as pricing and packaging.

The fast rhythm of the modern life as well the growth of the households consisting of only one person, single – parent families and women that work have led to changes in the way food is cooked and eaten. A positive result of these changes was the quick food technology, the way products are prepared and packed in order to offer safety and good quality of the food supply. Despite of these new findings, this may cause food contamination by some natural ingredients or by introducing them by accident or by the improper handling of food (Radulescu and John, 2008).

According to the European Union and the World Health Organization – food safety is everyone's responsibility from their origin until they reach the table. In order to assure the food quality and safety some procedures are needed in order make sure that products are untouched and monitoring procedures so as to end all the activities in good conditions.

Therefore food policy must be built around around some high food safety standards which should contribute to consumer and animals' health protection and around some standards concerning the environmental protection.

Nowadays the life standards has led to the food technology progress, imposed changes in the storage, preparation and consumption of food. Fast developments within a competitive climate doubled by the consumer's expectances and demands have promoted a food oversupply causing at the same time a huge risk of illness due to consumption of contaminated food or an inadequate treatment of them. According to the global statistics 79% of the diseases caused by contaminated food are due to restaurants and service units, 21% due to household sector and 3% due to food producers.

3. FOOD SAFETY IN ROMANIA

Food safety system has been modified since 1995 by the Romanian Ministry of Health Order no. 1956 and subsequently approved by HG 1198/2002 concerning the food hygiene standards and by law number 150/2004 regarding food safety.

The agrofood has a contribution which is quite significant in Romania's food exports. Currently, Romanian exports towards the European Union member countries require respecting the aspects expressed by the Directive number 178/2002. At first glance, the Romanian operators' activity would not be affected by the law. The main reason would be that most of Romanian producers and distributors are not involved in export marketing channels towards the markets within EU member countries. Exports

are usually accomplished through channels with various external partners who are willing to take on the majority of international commerce responsibilities in what concerns Romanian agro-food products. In fact, the supply-delivery management chain perspective, embraced by the economical operators, and especially the promotion of traceability concept increase the importance of visibility across all levels of production and marketing channels (Balan, 2008).

Traceability is being managed by the European legislation, regulations no. 178/2002 and 1642/2003 regarding food safety, and by the local legislation, law no. 150/2004 concerning animal food safety and quality standards, such as: 22005:2007, ISO 22000:2005 and ISO/TS 22004:2006 regarding traceability in the food chain. The European regulations have become mandatory in Romania after the 1st of January 2007, but the deadline for complying with these rules has been postponed from the beginning of 2008 to the beginning of 2013, date when farmers will receive the amounts foreseen in CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) completely, as currently they receive only fractions of that amount.

The challenges generated by the liability of ensuring traceability are of organizational and informational nature. Each economic agent from production, dressing and distribution of agro-food and straw products must have systems and procedures which allow the information to be available anytime within the organization and for qualified authorities, at their request.

The institutions qualified to protect the interests of consumers are: The Ministry of Public Health, the National Authority for Consumer Protection, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Rural Development and the National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority. The activities related to food safety are coordinated on the basis of a protocol which defines each institution's attributions in food control, from producer to consumer (Diaconescu, 2007).

Law no. 150/2004 regarding food safety, which transposes partially Regulation CE 178/2002, also called the General Food Law, aims at enhancing community acquis with direct consequences on life, health or consumers' safety and environment protection.

Romanian food legislation has one or more main objectives regarding life and human health protection, consumer interests, usage of proper practices in food commerce, taking into consideration, if such be the case, health and animal wealth protection, plant and environmental health (Law 150, 2004).

In order to accomplish the main objective, which aims at providing a high level of health and life protection for humans, food legislation is based on a risk analysis, besides the case when this approach is not adequate to the circumstances or to the nature of the measure.

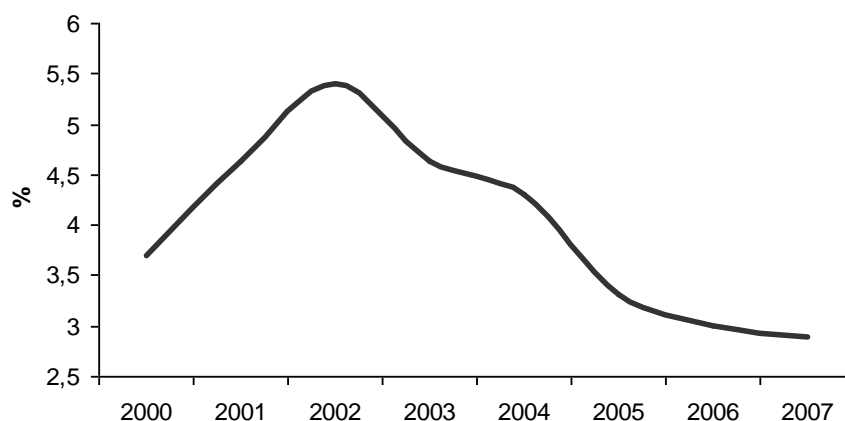


Fig. 3. Salmonella incidence rate in humans

Source: The National Institute of Statistics (2007), Statistical Indexes of sustainable development, http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/Web_IDD_BD/index.htm.

In what concerns the sustainable development index, section food safety and quality, in Romania, there is just one index and that is the Salmonella incidence rate in humans. As it can be seen, in recent years this rate has had a declining trend, showing that food safety in Romania has become a mandatory and important objective.

In conclusion, it can be said that policies regarding food safety are necessary for protecting people's health, as well as for regaining Romanian and EU consumers' trust in agro-products. Thus, the strategy embraced answers to the trends of a more and more demanding market, in which consumers ask not only safe products, but also products that can be identified and differentiated from other alternative products. The currently contemporary and educated consumer wishes to know which the origin of the food he consumes is and which its nutritional value is.

Healthy life expectancy growth, through preventing diseases and promoting policies that conduct to a more healthier lifestyle, is important for citizens' wealthy and contributes to the accomplishment of the objectives of Lisbon process regarding knowledge society and viability of public finances, which are affected by the rising costs of medical assistance and social insurances.

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